



Freedom Songs

Composition Project

Suggested Grades: 3-5

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National Core Arts Standards

- #3: Refine and complete artistic work
- #4: Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.
- #8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
- #10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.
- #11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding

Objectives

- Define the term **Freedom Songs**.
- Learn about and compose a Protest Song

Materials

Book: *We Shall Overcome* by Debbie Levy

YouTube Videos: See List at the end of the lesson



MARIA DEL VALLE

Maria is an activist, mother, musician, teacher, consultant, and social entrepreneur. She currently teaches at the The Equity Project Charter School in New York. Maria co-founded Upbeat City Arts, a community based arts program and has won several teaching awards.

Overview:

Spirituals such as "We Shall Overcome" and "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around" were sung as Freedom songs used in the Civil Rights movement and were used during several movements worldwide, such as the South African resistance of Apartheid. Freedom songs are sung today during protests and rallies. Students will learn about the Freedom Singers, sing We Shall Overcome, and compose a protest song.

Suggested Teaching Process:

Lesson One: Define Freedom Songs

1. Sing the song "This Little of Mine." Ask students about the song.
 - Have they heard the song before?
 - What do they think the song is about?
2. This Little of Mine is a Freedom Song. A Freedom song is an anthem sung during the Civil Rights movement. The Freedom Riders made these songs famous across the United States.
3. Freedom Riders are people who challenged radical laws in the American South in the 1960's, originally by refusing to abide by the laws designating that seats on buses be segregated by race.
4. Teach the song "This Little Light of Mine" using echo imitation.
5. Read the story "We Shall Overcome (A Story of a Song) by Debbie Levy.
6. Encourage students to sing along with the song's chorus —the chorus repeats throughout the story.
7. Ask students to reflect on what they learned. *please add in the answers to these questions – some teachers may not know the answers, and so you need to include this information in the*



lesson plan.

- What happened when Ella forgot the lyrics? (Ella started to improvise her own original lyrics and scat melodies).
- What did she do next? (Ella started to imitate Louis Armstrong's singing voice while scat singing)

Lesson Two: Learn Freedom Songs

1. Teach the first and second verse of "We Shall Overcome" using echo imitation.
2. Sing along with the recording. [We Shall Overcome - Sing For Freedom](#) featuring the Freedom Singers.
3. Listen to the Freedom Singers' performance [Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around](#).
4. Ask the following questions: *please add in the answers to these questions – some teachers may not know the answers, and so you need to include this information in the lesson plan.*
 - What moment in history did the lead singer describe? (The Civil Right Movement).
 - What was going on during this time period? (Segregation, Mass Jailings, protests).
 - What is this song about? (This song is about not letting any situation or person make you feel discouraged).
 - How did this song inspire people? (This song inspired people to continue fighting for their rights.)
5. Teach the song's lyrics **Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around** using echo imitation.

Lesson Three: Compose a Freedom Song

1. Review the song **Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around**.
2. Ask students to describe changes they want to see in the world. Example: Pollution
3. Write their answers on the board
4. Next, ask students to list ideas that they "won't let turn you around" – explain this phrase if students are not clear of the meaning of this phrase. Examples: Late Bus or Rainy Weather
5. Change the lyrics of the song **Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around** as a class using student suggestions.
6. Sing the new version of the song together as a class.

References

Folk Era. (n.d.). Freedom is a constant struggle: Songs of the Mississippi civilrights movement.

Levy, D., & Brantley-Newton, V. (2015). *We shall overcome The story of a song*. Scholastic.

Public Broadcasting Service. (n.d.). *American roots music: The songs and the artists - the freedom singers*. PBS. Retrieved November 29, 2021, from https://www.pbs.org/americanrootsmusic/pbs_arm_saa_freedom singers.html.

The freedom singers "ain't gonna let nobody ... - youtube. (n.d.). Retrieved November 29, 2021, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dwkomneAdyl>.

We shall overcome - sing for freedom: The story ... - youtube. (n.d.). Retrieved November 29, 2021, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=erenla41-r8>.



This Little Light of Mine

African American Spiritual

This lit - tle light of mine. I'm gon - na let it shine. This lit - tle light of mine. I'm gon - na let it shine. This lit - tle light of mine. let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

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We Will Overcome

Freedom Song

We will ov - er come. We will o - ver come, We will o - ver come some day. Oh Down in my heart, I do be - lieve, We'll o - ver come some day.

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Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around

Civil Rights Song

Ain't gon - na let ___ no bo - dy

turn me a - round, turn me a - round. Ain't gon - na

let ___ no - bo - dy turn me a - round I'm gon - na

keep on a walk - in', keep on a talk - in',

march - ing up to free - dom land.

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